

farmers, and the agency's experience in lending to farms of extremely large size is not a happy one.

TRIBUTE TO STATE SENATOR LES KLEVEN

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, last week South Dakota lost a great public servant, State Senator Les Kleven. Les lost a brave and courageous fight against cancer. His leadership and innovation will be greatly missed.

A native of North Dakota, Les moved to Sturgis, SD, in 1962 to start KBHB radio station. Under his direction and leadership, KBHB grew to become one of the premier radio stations in western South Dakota. To this day, it remains an important source of news, information, and entertainment to thousands of listeners in western South Dakota and nearby States. Over the years, Les often had his station broadcast live the meetings I held in the Sturgis area on agricultural disasters, the farm bill, and other important issues. I always appreciated his valuable advice on issues important to the South Dakota broadcast and radio industry, as well as many other issues.

Les was a past president of the South Dakota Broadcasters Association. His love for South Dakota and service to the State did not begin and end with radio. He served three terms in the South Dakota State House of Representatives in the 1970's. In 1992, Les was elected to the South Dakota State Senate. Of course, much as he did on the air waves, he significantly affected South Dakota political currents. Throughout his career as a member of the South Dakota State Legislature, Les distinguished himself as a leader and fiscal conservative. His constituents and his colleagues knew him to be independent, straightforward, and fair. Indeed, his contributions to the State of South Dakota will long be remembered.

Most important, Les was a family man. Though all who knew Les held him in high respect and admiration, none could be more proud of him than his mother Alice, his lovely wife, Marguerite, and his two children, Andy and Jazal.

Les Kleven's honesty and integrity will be greatly missed. His accomplishments as a radio innovator, a State legislator, and a proud father provide an inspiring example of the South Dakota spirit—a man who gave to his profession, his community, his State, and to his family. Les was a family man, a pillar of the community, and a good friend.

We will all miss him.

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

• Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

The Armenian genocide marks an ignominious chapter in world history. It reminds us how low unchecked hatred can drag the human spirit, unleashing cruelty and brutality. As we memorialize the Armenians who died needlessly in the genocide, we must resolve never to forget how they suffered at the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

Nor can we forget how the Armenian people continue suffering today as the country struggles to cope with the devastating impact of Azerbaijan's blockade. The blockade has put a stranglehold on the Armenian people. Necessities—like food and heating oil—are in scarce supply. Such shortages endanger the lives of many in Armenia, especially during the harsh winter months.

While humanitarian assistance provided by the United States can help alleviate the suffering, it cannot lift the blockade. Only the Government of Azerbaijan can do that. That is why we must continue to apply pressure. We should not provide United States foreign assistance to Azerbaijan as long as it maintains its blockade of Armenia. The blockade should be lifted without delay.

Mr. President, I hope my colleagues will join me in commemorating this anniversary. It is important that we remember the atrocities of the past, and support efforts to allow the Armenian people an opportunity to live in peace in the future. •

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

COMMONSENSE PRODUCT LIABILITY AND LEGAL REFORM ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 956, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 956) to establish legal standards and procedures for product liability litigation, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, as the Senate begins its debate of H.R. 956 I wish, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, to discuss the provisions of S. 565—the Product Liability Fairness Act—as reported by our committee. S. 565 as reported will be offered as a substitute for H.R. 956, therefore I shall discuss the Senate bill as we begin this debate. Earlier this month, the Commerce Committee conducted extensive hearings over 2 days and then voted 13 to 6 to report the legislation with an amendment on April 6. S. 565 as reported is a fair and balanced bill.

Mr. President, as we begin I cannot help but point out: Here we are again—product liability reform being debated

by the Senate of the United States. Do not get me wrong. As chairman of the Commerce Committee, I am proud to bring S. 565 to the floor. So why do I say, "Here we are again"? It is not that I do not think this is an important issue. Far from it. This bill is vital. It is vital not just to America's businesses but also to our Nation's workers and consumers. It also is vital to the victims of injuries caused by products.

THE HISTORY

It is just that we have come this far before. Indeed, since 1981, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation has held 23 days of hearings on product liability reform. S. 565 marks the seventh piece of product liability reform legislation reported by the Commerce Committee over that 15-year period. It is my fervent hope this time we can achieve meaningful results.

Mr. President, I see no reason why we cannot. This year's bill is balanced and reasoned. I consider it superior to legislation debated in the last Congress in that it does not include a provision to disallow punitive damage awards in lawsuits for certain manufacturers receiving pre-market certification from the Federal Aviation Administration.

As my colleagues know, that section of last year's bill made this Senator extremely uncomfortable, so uncomfortable as to put me in the equally uncomfortable position of voting against cloture on legislation addressing other legal reforms I have supported and voted for many times over the years.

I personally have been involved in the product liability reform movement since the early 1980's. I am proud of that. I was an original cosponsor of the Risk Retention Act that became law in 1981 and provided for liability insurance pools—or risk retention groups—for businesses. Throughout the 1980's I cosponsored numerous uniform product liability bills with Senators Kasten, Danforth, and GORTON. The early bills were supported strongly by the business community but lacked bipartisan support in Congress. I chaired Small Business Committee field hearings in Sioux Falls and Rapid City, SD, on this issue in 1985.

I commend the efforts to Senators GORTON and ROCKEFELLER with regard to S. 565. They are, indeed, tireless advocates for meaningful reform of America's product liability system. They demonstrated serious leadership in the committee on this issue and the bill reflects their commitment.

KEY PROVISIONS

I would now like to take a few minutes to briefly highlight some of the key provisions of S. 565 as reported.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

This legislation provides either party in a product liability suit may offer to participate in a voluntary, nonbinding state-approved alternative dispute resolution [ADR] procedure. If a defendant in a products suit is asked to participate in ADR and refuses and later a